DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 227 541 EA 015 353

AUTHOR Layden, Kent
TITLE Facilitator's Guide: Censorship Workshop.
INSTITUTION Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, Oreg.
REPORT NO NWREL-REP-5419A
PUB DATE 13 Sep 79
NOTE 17p.; Produced in conjunction with the Keys to School Boardsmanship Project.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Board of Education Role; *Boards of Education; *Books; *Censorship; Elementary Secondary Education; Guidelines; *Role Playing; *Workshops
IDENTIFIERS *Board of Education Members; Controversial Materials; *Facilitators

ABSTRACT

To help leaders or "facilitators" of a series of simulation exercises on controversial issues for school board members, this guide describes how the simulations work and provides some of the materials required for the simulation exercise on censorship and book banning. After defining simulation or gaming exercises, the author notes the materials needed and lists the principal features and the learning objectives of simulations. Next, the role of the facilitator is described. Then the segments of the simulation exercise are outlined, including preparations before participants arrive, separation of participants into small groups, presentation of introductory remarks and general instructions by the facilitator, supervision of the participants' role playing, "brainstorming" after the role playing to identify key ideas, cross-group sharing or discussion, and a concluding session with distribution of a fact sheet. Five "role sheets" are provided for the book-banning issue, each with a description of the fictional situation and of one of five roles. The roles include the chairperson, the back-to-basics advocate, the civil libertarian, the newly appointed member, and the advocate of local control. Suggestions on the format for the fact sheet are attached. (RW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED227541

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M. Margaret Rogers
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

CENSORSHIP WORKSHOP

Kent Layden, Consultant
Rural Education Program
Keys to School Boardsmanship Project

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
710 S. W. Second Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97204

EA 015 353

KEYS TO SCHOOL BOARDSMANSHIP

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

CENSORSHIP WORKSHOP

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Overview

What are Simulations/Gaming Exercises?

Simulation games are learning contexts in which the participant responds within the simulation game as if s/he were operating in the actual system of interaction being simulated. Interaction is structured by rules and physical circumstances. Resultant interaction ranges from the highly restricted participant behavior of a computer simulation game, through the less inhibited behavior of a board game to the flexible open-ended behavior of role-playing simulation games which allow participant behavior more closely proximate to that in the actual system of interaction. Whatever the format, interpersonal simulation games combine the competitive aspects of gaming with the reality replication of simulation to allow the participant a personal glimpse of how it "feels" to be in the dynamics of a real system of interpersonal interaction.

Introduction to the Exercises

Each of the school board exercises explores a controversial issue facing education leaders. The exercises follow a common format and have been designed to take approximately one hour to complete. Debriefing of the experience, following the exercises, allows an opportunity to review and summarize participant learning outcomes. A minimum of materials is required: (1) this facilitator's guide, (2) individual participant role sheets, and (3) concluding fact sheets. Principal features of the exercises are:

1. Rapid Involvement. Without complicated rules to observe first, participants become immediately involved with the issues. This

involvement shifts responsibility for the teaching/learning process to the learner and away from the facilitator.

2. Immediate Application of New Knowledge. These exercises provide practice in the manipulation of concepts. They afford the opportunity to make mistakes and, because these mistakes are often shared by others, the fear of making them is greatly reduced.

3. Comparisons with Others. The exercises provide a rare opportunity to compare one's own responses with others faced with the same problem at the same time and under the same circumstances. These comparisons can reveal behavior which may be avoided or new approaches which others may apply successfully.

4. Consensus of Peers. The exercises do not need the authority of the facilitator to convey the message. The opinions and consensus of other participants provide a variety of explanations and at the same time substitute the experience and convictions of peers for the authority of the person in charge.

5. Learning by Teaching. Since each participant must grapple with a given "role," s/he must defend his/her point of view and explain his/her position. This forces the same careful thought process as a teacher explaining points to a class. The individual is therefore learner and teacher, receiving highly effective stimuli from the exchange of roles.

With these exercises, the facilitator has a controlled situation in which s/he can observe the responses of participants--individually and collectively.

Under these circumstances participants have a relatively "safe" environment to explore the ramifications of a controversial issue which affects them not only cognitively, but affectively as well. Here participants

can experience an integration of their thoughts and feelings about the issue under study, which encourages clarity in approaching policy implications for school board consideration.

Specific learning objectives of the exercises include:

1. The participant will gain a better understanding of the controversial situation which the exercise addresses.
2. The participant will gain a better understanding of his/her own position regarding the controversial situation which the exercise addresses.
3. The participant will gain a better understanding of others' positions respecting the controversial situation which the exercise addresses.
4. The participant will be able to state possible board actions related to the controversial situation which the exercise addresses.
5. The participant will be able to state key ideas from which a board statement could be formulated to address the controversial issue before the board.

Role of the Facilitator

You will introduce to the participants the "issue" and the general plan of the hour. Generally, however, you will stand aside while participants interact. Your role is "administrator," keeping track of time and giving instructions. You won't, for example, participate directly in the discussions and decision making while these are taking place, but you will assist groups to adhere to the time plan of the exercise. Later you will pull together the experience of the group in a concluding summary/debrief, when you will compare the discussion of various groups and review them for the benefit of all. In

brief, you will act as a catalyst and a resource which the group will draw upon. In this way you will assist each participant to derive the maximum benefit of participation.

Each complete exercise is administered in five basic segments:

1. You make a few brief introductory remarks, as suggested later in this guide. (5 minutes)
2. The participants role play a school board meeting in groups of five, dealing with the particular topic of the exercise. (15 minutes)
3. You conclude the role play and ask participants to first share among themselves how they felt during the role play, and then to brainstorm key ideas, that they can agree upon, for action about the topic within their groups of five. (15 minutes)
4. You lead a cross-group discussion of major ideas/actions that might be taken. (10 minutes)
5. You conduct a brief concluding discussion, dealing with substantive questions and compare the various suggested actions arrived at by the different groups. Distribute concluding fact sheets and review them. (15 minutes)

Procedure

It is important that you become thoroughly familiar with each exercise you run. Work it through with friends or colleagues before attempting to facilitate a group. Be familiar enough with the content to be able to answer any questions that might arise.

I. BEFORE THE PARTICIPANTS ARRIVE

A. See that the room is set up properly. The participants should be able to sit five to a table. If only long tables are available, one group of five can sit around each end of a table in a semicircle.

B. See that the following materials are available:

1. Pencils and paper for each participant.

2. A blackboard or flip chart for the concluding summary.

3. Role sheets and concluding fact sheets for each participant. DO NOT DISTRIBUTE THE ROLE SHEETS UNTIL THE END OF YOUR INTRODUCTION.

II. AFTER THE PARTICIPANTS ARRIVE

A. Select the groups. Ideally, groups should consist of five members each of whom do not work closely together. Participants who work together should be asked to change groups so that potential interpersonal dynamics among colleagues do not inhibit free exploration of the issue.

B. Under no circumstances should a superior and a subordinate be in the same group. Organizational level differences in any one group should be avoided as much as possible to reduce peer pressure to conform to an authority's view.

III. AFTER THE GROUPS ARE SELECTED AND SEATED

A. Make your introductory remarks. Explain that the purpose of the exercise is to become more aware of the particular issue and its implication for school policy--set by the board of education.

Outline the sequence of events of the exercise (as explained above under "Role of the Facilitator"). Indicate that you will keep time and lead general discussions.

B. Give the groups their general instructions:

1. Explain that each participant will be given a role sheet which represents the position that they will be asked to take during the role play. Each person is to do the best job with the role they are given that they are able. There is no right or wrong "play" of the role.

2. Since in every group there are usually a few people who are somewhat apprehensive when starting this kind of exercise, it is worthwhile to say a few words at the beginning to reassure them. You could remind them that the purpose here is to explore the issue and gain new and useful ideas from one another about how they can be more effective at home. It is also worthwhile to remind them that they will have an opportunity to share their personal views insofar as they differ from their "role play" views during the group brainstorm following the role play.

3. Distribute the role sheets, allow one minute for participants to read their roles, and instruct the school board meetings to begin under the direction of each chairperson.

IV. DURING THE ROLE PLAY

A. Circulate among the groups and give help if necessary:

1. You may wish to note some of the substantive questions that arise during the role play for use during the concluding

discussion. However, you should not answer this type of question directly--let the group settle it by discussion. Let groups know, if necessary, that no decision is required during the role play.

2. More detailed questions, should they arise, about the specific environment under which the topic is under discussion are best handled by pointing out that all groups are working with the same material and that participants are bounded only by their imagination.

3. Should a given group have difficulty "getting into the topic" (unlikely), you might point out that they think about people they know "back home" who express similar views and let them go from there. The facilitator should not defend the point of view of the role play. If participants in a given group fail to "play," ask them to discuss their respective "roles" and see to what extent they represent legitimate points of view in their own communities.

B. Keep an eye on the time. After 15 minutes conclude the role play and ask participants to shift from their roles to themselves. Ask them to select a recorder from their group and move into brainstorming under direction of the chairperson. Ask participants to begin by having them share their responses to the following questions among themselves:

1. Is the role you played similar to or different from the one you would play at home?

2. Do you know anyone in your home community who is "like" the role you played in the role play?

V. DURING THE BRAINSTORMING

A. Set the stage for group brainstorming by instructing participants to follow these general guidelines which you list on newsprint or the blackboard:

1. Criticism is ruled out.
2. Imagination is welcome.
3. Quantity is wanted.
4. Combination and improvement are sought.

B. Remind participants that they have two tasks:

1. To find key ideas about the nature of the topic that they can agree upon; and
2. To determine what actions they as a school board might take at this juncture to effectively deal with the issue.

C. Let participants know the time constraints:

1. About seven minutes for each task.
2. You will announce time to move from key ideas to possible actions.

D. As brainstorming proceeds:

1. Note similar points being raised among the groups for later discussion.
2. Answer only procedural rather than substantive questions that might arise.

VI. CROSS GROUP SHARING

A. Lead a cross group discussion:

1. Ask groups to select a spokesperson.

2. Begin noting on newsprint or the blackboard major ideas from each group in sequence. Try not to cut off any spokesperson, but note that time is limited and ask each to recite only new information not previously mentioned.

3. During the discussion your judgment is critical. Only key points should be made under two headings:

   Key Ideas Possible Board Actions

4. When major points have been elicited, note that the exercise necessarily oversimplifies--but that it illustrates some points that relate to board prerogative about the topic.

VII. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

A. Highlight controversial points from the two lists. If time permits, allow some discussion of items that seem to have aroused greatest interest or difference of opinion. Indicate your view of possible implications by asking some questions. For example:

1. What insights or learnings have resulted for you about this issue from the exercise?

2. Which of the possible actions that the board might take--as suggested during the exercise--seem crucial to you?

3. Among the key ideas suggested during the exercise, which would seem to have particular impact in your local district if the issue arose?

B. Distribute fact sheets. Discuss salient policy issues around the topic. Answer questions.

C. Thank participants for their participation; answer specific substantive questions.

CHAIRPERSON

Issue: Book Banning

Situation

For several years now Amityville has maintained a progressive educational policy that has embraced expansion of curriculum topics and subjects of study. Until recently, finances have been no problem. But as Amityville has grown--by virtue of its proximity to Consumer City--so too have the range of opinions reflected in the community. Different voices have been heard at the PTA and strangers have attended board meetings. Last week a placard was carried which said "Ban Obscene Material in the Schools" and your high school librarian received an anonymous and threatening letter. Your superintendent investigated the situation and reports that all library books are selected and approved by a district book committee. He is uncertain which specific books are in question.

Role Position

You have chaired the school board for five years and come from a long line of Amityville residents. The superintendent has asked for a ruling from the board about where it stands respecting "censorship" in the schools. S/he asks for board direction in a growing controversial area. You do not favor censorship, but do believe that school policy must reflect local values. You wish to steer the board to an "informed" judgment, but wish the board to act by consensus under your leadership. You will vote only to break a tie if it comes to that.

BACK TO BASICS

Issue: Book Banning

Situation

For several years now Amityville has maintained a progressive educational policy that has embraced expansion of curriculum topics and subjects of study. Until recently, finances have been no problem. But as Amityville has grown--by virtue of its proximity to Consumer City--so too have the range of opinions reflected in the community. Different voices have been heard at the PTA and strangers have attended board meetings. Last week a placard was carried which said "Ban Obscene Material in the Schools" and your high school librarian received an anonymous and threatening letter. Your superintendent investigated the situation and reports that all library books are selected and approved by a district book committee. He is uncertain which specific books are in question.

Role Position

You are a relative newcomer to Amityville, but your strong views on issues of justice and morality led to a sweeping victory in last year's school board election. You believe that schools have taken over from family control in ways that our forefathers never intended. Your election mandate, as you see it, is to return some parts of the school program (e.g., moral, ethical, values) to family control. That means less control by professional educators--especially on controversial issues like this. You have read recent literature documenting "smut" in school libraries elsewhere and if that is true in Amityville--which you intend to find out--you will be the first to expose this sad situation, and right it!

CIVIL LIBERTARIAN

Issue: Book Banning

Situation

For several years now Amityville has maintained a progressive educational policy that has embraced expansion of curriculum topics and subjects of study. Until recently, finances have been no problem. But as Amityville has grown--by virtue of its proximity to Consumer City--so too have the range of opinions reflected in the community. Different voices have been heard at the PTA and strangers have attended board meetings. Last week a placard was carried which said "Ban Obscene Material in the Schools" and your high school librarian received an anonymous and threatening letter. Your superintendent investigated the situation and reports that all library books are selected and approved by a district book committee. He is uncertain which specific books are in question.

Role Position

As something of a historian, you are very familiar with the ways in which information or the lack of it affect people's judgments. You remember the McCarthy era with horror and in your mild way have always championed the right for children to make their own decisions. You have argued previously that it is not the role of the school to protect children from the world, but to show them the world--and let them come to their own decisions. You will strenuously resist any move to ban books from the school on First Amendment grounds--should the will of the board move in that direction.

NEW MEMBER

Issue: Book Banning

Situation

For several years now Amityville has maintained a progressive educational policy that has embraced expansion of curriculum topics and subjects of study. Until recently, finances have been no problem. But as Amityville has grown--by virtue of its proximity to Consumer City--so too have the range of opinions reflected in the community. Different voices have been heard at the PTA and strangers have attended board meetings. Last week a placard was carried which said "Ban Obscene Material in the Schools" and your high school librarian received an anonymous and threatening letter. Your superintendent investigated the situation and reports that all library books are selected and approved by a district book committee. He is uncertain which specific books are in question.

Role Position

You have just been appointed to the board to fill a vacancy. Your previous involvement with the Amityville PTA made you a unanimous candidate among other board members. You have yet to voice a strong stand on any issue before the board, preferring to "learn the ropes" as long as you can. To the extent that you can influence other board members, you would raise broad process concerns--such as, "How have other school districts dealt with similar issues?". Caution is your central concern and you will not be pushed into a hasty decision.

LOCAL CONTROL

Issue: Book Banning

Situation

For several years now Amityville has maintained a progressive educational policy that has embraced expansion of curriculum topics and subjects of study. Until recently, finances have been no problem. But as Amityville has grown--by virtue of its proximity to Consumer City--so too have the range of opinions reflected in the community. Different voices have been heard at the PTA and strangers have attended board meetings. Last week a placard was carried which said "Ban Obscene Material in the Schools" and your high school librarian received an anonymous and threatening letter. Your superintendent investigated the situation and reports that all library books are selected and approved by a district book committee. He is uncertain which specific books are in question.

Role Position

Once again an issue supports your central concern--local control. For too long both state and federal governments have mandated that local districts fall into line on every issue. Well, here is a situation where the people legitimately should have their say. Though it is a matter of personal opinion which books are appropriate to a school and its children, that's hardly the issue--the real issue is who is to decide? You don't want courts telling the board what it can or can't do--the board was elected by the people to make decisions on their behalf. This is the perfect time to demonstrate that they elected decision makers. You might wish to let your connection to the "real" people be known by suggesting that the board survey the community to find out what "the people" really think. Also, you might let the other members know that you are truly informed. Perhaps cite the August 1979 New York District Court ruling supporting the "right" of the Island Trees School Board to ban books from school libraries (eleven books, including two Pulitzer Prize winners) on the grounds that the board determined they were "vulgar, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic or degraded women."

Some Thoughts on Format for "Concluding Fact Sheets"

I feel that the "fact sheets" should summarize the lcurrent "state of the art" about the particular issue under study. The following format is merely suggestive of the range of material that might be covered in a "one-pager" which can be referred to (as outline if necessary) during the concluding discussion and subsequently by participants once they return home:

1. Recent court decisions effecting board role and function regarding the topic (brief review and summary of salient points).
2. Duplications of the above for school board policy setting or review if an existing policy is in place. What must be covered by law and board responsibility in the particular instance.
3. Some points to consider with respect to organized efforts in local communities related to the particular topic--who's who, what ax they grind and how (c.f. American School Board Journal article on the grabbers and how they "come into" a community).
4. Process tips on how to reduce tension around the issue and how to involve citizens in the creative resolution of the issue locally.